

NSC BRIEFING

12 November 1953

PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

- I. First reports from Saudi Arabia after death of King Ibn Saud indicate:
 - A. No immediate break in maintaining central authority under new King Saud,
 - B. US oil and military installations on Persian Gulf are safe,
 - C. No change in Saudi relations with US nor in Saudi suspicions of British intentions.

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- A. Saud's ability and authority are largely untested. Former crown price previously leaned on and was backed by prestige of Ibn Saud, who single-handedly united kingdom.

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C. External difficulties which can enhance Saud's domestic problems:

1. Dispute with Britain over the Buraimi oasis, which may intensify rivalry between British-led tribal sheikhs (along Persian Gulf around to Aden) and Arab leaders loyal to Saudi Court.
2. Unknown effect of Ibn Saud's death on Saudi Arabia's position in Arab world. Saud visited several Arab states earlier this year, but his influence is still uncertain. Possibility therefore of renewal of traditional Saudi hostility toward Iraq and weakened ties with Egypt and Syria.

3. Important tribal sheikhs loyal to Ibn Saud may under stimulation of new situation attempt to become independent. Saudi army about 8,000, tribal levies 75,000.

D. Additional problems are posed by new labor unrest in oil industry.

1. Government mishandled October strike in Dhahran.
2. Communists probably involved.



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